

## Russia in Libya

### **AFRICOM sounds the alarm: Russia's Libya deployment**

On Tuesday, May 26 AFRICOM issued a [press release](#) in which it assessed that the Kremlin sent military fighter aircraft to Libya to provide support to the Russian state-sponsored private military companies (PMCs) in-country and Khalifa Haftar. These military fighter aircraft were sent from Russia to Libya via Syria. In Syria, the planes were painted in an effort to disguise their Russian origin and then flown to the Al Jufra airbase in Libya.

"Russia is clearly trying to tip the scales in its favor in Libya," according to **U.S. AFRICOM Commander General Stephen Townsend**. Townsend stated: "Just like I saw them doing in Syria, they are expanding their military footprint in Africa using government-supported mercenary groups like Wagner."

Townsend added: "For too long, Russia has denied the full extent of its involvement in the ongoing Libyan conflict. Well, there is no denying it now. We watched as Russia flew fourth generation jet fighters to Libya -- every step of the way." Townsend pointed out that this was further proof of Kremlin involvement because "neither the LNA nor private military companies can arm, operate and sustain these fighters without state support -- support they are getting from Russia."

U.S. Air Force Gen. Jeff Harrigan, commander, U.S. Air Forces in Europe-Air Forces Africa believes that Russian deployment in Libya means Europe's southern flank will become vulnerable to attack. In the release, Harrigan explained: "If Russia seizes basing on Libya's coast, the next logical step is they deploy permanent long-range anti-access area denial (A2AD) capabilities. If that day comes, it will create very real security concerns on Europe's southern flank."

### **Images released**

U.S. AFRICOM [released](#) 15 satellite images of Russian MiG-29 jets in Libya at the Al Jufra air base. As U.S. AFRICOM Commander Stephen Townsend noted: "The world heard Mr. Haftar declare he was about to unleash a new air campaign. That will be Russian mercenary pilots flying Russian-supplied aircraft to bomb Libyans."

### **U.S. Embassy speaks up**

On Memorial Day, the U.S. Embassy in Libya issued [a statement](#) declaring that: "The United States is **proud to partner** with the legitimate, UN-recognized government of Libya, the GNA" and described Haftar and his soldiers as "forces seeking to impose a new political order by military means or **terrorism**." This statement followed a call between U.S. Ambassador to Libya Richard Norland and Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj as well as a call between Sarraj and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

### **The Wall Street Journal highlights Russian escalation**

*The Journal* [reports](#) that Russia has escalated its involvement in Libya by sending MiG29 aircraft in addition to Wagner Group mercenaries already in the country fighting on behalf of Haftar. European Council on Foreign Affairs expert Tarek Megerisi told the Journal: "This move removes Russia's fig leaf of deniability, and clearly stakes out a sphere of influence for itself that crucially protects Libya's oil crescent." Megerisi believes the Russian air support is intended to bolster Haftar's defensive position after recently suffering several devastating losses.

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### **The New York Times reveals a possible 'permanent' Russian base**

Michael Kofman, Director of the Russia program at the Center for Naval Analysis, told [\*the Times\*](#): "Not only could Russian air power change the military balance in Libya itself, but this could be the first step in a gradual escalation to what eventually becomes a permanent Russian military deployment in the country."

### **Bloomberg covers the Russian military losses**

Bloomberg [reports](#) that GNA forces pushed over 1,000 Russian and Syrian mercenaries, fighting on behalf of Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar, to withdraw from the frontlines of Tripoli, abandoning their Tripoli offensive.

### **The New York Times profiles a botched mercenary operation**

The Times [reports](#) that UN investigators have found evidence of an aborted 2019 mercenary campaign to help Haftar. The agreement, brokered for \$80 million, ultimately collapsed after Haftar took issue with the aircraft the mercenaries provided, ending with the mercenaries escaping to Malta on inflatable boats. These mercenaries included military veterans from South Africa, Australia, the UK, and the U.S. and were part of a mission organized by the Dubai-based companies Lancaster6 and Opus Capital Asset. The goal, had the expedition been successful, was to provide Haftar with a marine strike force comprised of speedboats and attack helicopters to target merchant ships.



Subj: AFRICOM, US Embassy Condemn Russians In Libya, Support The GNA

NAME—

Former Senator David Vitter here. I hope you are staying safe in this strange environment.

There are several new developments regarding Russian interference in Libya, directly against US interests, which I wanted to highlight.

Russia has sent fighter planes to support Haftar, its most blatant illegal interference to date. And AFRICOM quickly denounced the move in a public statement.

As AFRICOM Commander General Stephen Townsend explained: "Russia is clearly trying to tip the scales in its favor in Libya. . . . Just like I saw them doing in Syria, they are expanding their military footprint in Africa using government-supported mercenary groups like Wagner."

On Memorial Day, the U.S. Embassy in Libya issued a strong statement, declaring: "The United States is proud to partner with the legitimate, UN-recognized government of Libya, the GNA." It described Haftar and his soldiers as "forces seeking to impose a new political order by military means or terrorism."

This statement followed productive calls between U.S. Ambassador to Libya Richard Norland and Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj, and between Sarraj and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Attached is a concise one-pager summarizing these and other developments regarding Russia's nefarious activity in Libya. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you so much.

David

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United Nations

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Security Council

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**Identical letters dated 8 May 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council**

I write to inform you of recent alarming activities carried out by the Iranian regime in complete disregard of international law and Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#). In addition to its continued covert development of a nuclear weapons programme, the Iranian regime has repeatedly violated its obligations by means of repeated ballistic missile tests and the illicit export of advanced weapons.

In the first half of 2020, the Iranian regime conducted two public space launch attempts. On 9 February 2020, the regime attempted but failed to launch an observation satellite on board of a Simorgh space launch vehicle, and on 22 April 2020, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps claimed that it had successfully launched an observation satellite on board of a Qassed space launch vehicle.

These aforementioned launches are in clear violation of article 3 of annex B to Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), which states that: “Iran is called upon not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology.” Both the Simorgh and Qassed space launch vehicles incorporate technologies that are virtually identical to those of ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

Moreover, the recent space launch by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which they claimed as successful, is a disturbing development in and of itself. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is an Iranian military organization, designated as a terrorist organization by the United States, which advances a violent terrorist agenda in the Middle East through its Quds Force. The involvement of this terrorist organization in Iran’s space programme exposes the true objective behind it, despite the regime’s claims of its “peaceful” nature.

In another blatant violation, the Iranian regime continues to transfer advanced weaponry illicitly throughout the region. In November 2019, imagery surfaced of four Iranian “Dehlaviyeh” anti-tank guided missile systems being employed by militias associated with General Haftar’s forces in Libya. The presence of this advanced Iranian-manufactured system on Libyan soil is another grave violation of Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), as set forth in article 6 (b) of annex B, which prevents “the supply, sale, or transfer of arms or related materiel from Iran ...”.

Furthermore, the transfer of arms to Libya stands in direct violation of the arms embargo established by Security Council resolution [1970 \(2011\)](#), as well as subsequent Security Council resolutions renewing that embargo, including resolution

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2473 (2019). The Iranian regime's transfer of advanced arms to Libya is additional proof of the Iranian regime's ambitions for regional influence, as well as its utter disregard of the international calls for the cessation of hostilities and non-interference.

As the world unites against the common threat of COVID-19, it is unfortunate to note the Iranian regime's relentless pursuit of regional military interests. As a country devastated by the COVID-19 outbreak, it is perplexing to witness resources being diverted from national emergency relief efforts to advance grandiose provocative endeavours, such as the space launch on 22 April. Instead of addressing the devastating effects of the pandemic on its own population, Iran has engaged in a massive campaign aimed at lifting sanctions imposed on it for its malign activities. While the Iranian population suffering from COVID-19 deserves much needed medical assistance, lifting sanctions would be a major mistake. I would also note that this Iranian campaign against sanctions is disingenuous, as they include humanitarian exception provisions.

I call on the Security Council to condemn the Iranian regime for its recurring violations of international law and Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). It is imperative that the violations described in the present letter, as well as in previous ones, be reflected in the report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), and for the Security Council to remain seized of this issue in its deliberations.

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Danny **Danon**  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

Happy Friday--I hope you continuing to stay safe in this strange environment. Looks like the light at the end of the tunnel is drawing closer—or at least I can only hope!

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Please let me know if you have any questions.

Deirdre

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